The Melville Society

NEWSLETTER

JUNE, 1950

Volume VI Number 2

Along with many older and more important periodicals, the Newsletter has encountered a number of minor difficulties which have accumulated to make this issue almost sixty days late. Most of the delay has been occasioned by the urgency of the editor's other duties. It is hoped, however, that future numbers can be issued within the announced months of publication. These months are March, June, September, and December of each year.

SEALTS CHECK-LIST

By vote of the members attending last year's annual meeting, it was agreed that the Society would purchase from the **Harvard Library Bulletin** and distribute to all fully paid-up members copies of the check-list of Melville's reading compiled by Merton M. Sealts. Originally, the cost was estimated at something between twenty-five and fifty dollars. Harvard supplied us with 105 copies, which were duly distributed by the secretary. The total bill, not counting the cost of envelopes and postage, actually has amounted to $83.20. This increase resulted in part from the unexpectedly large number of works which Mr. Sealts was able to identify and include in his list. Since the amount of the bill is a good deal more than our treasury at present will bear, it has been necessary to arrange with Harvard for payment in two installments.

Numerous inquiries are still being received by the secretary regarding additional copies of the check-list. Now that the supply has been exhausted, he cannot honor further requests. A few copies may still be obtained from the compiler, who has had them printed at his own expense. Paperbound copies may be purchased for $1.25 each, and interleaved cloth-bound copies (only three or four available) for $2.75. Those interested should write to Merton M. Sealts, Department of English, Lawrence College, Appleton, Wisconsin.

NOTES

Future Presentations Magazine for June, 1950, has published a comic book version of **"Moby-Dick,** the World's Most Adventurous Thrilling Story!" (Hero Books. Inc., 221 Conyngham Avenue, Wilkes-Barre, Penn., 10 cents).

School edition: **Moby-Dick,** ed. Erwin H. Schubert, adapted by Glenn Holder (New York: Globe Book Co., 1950). $1.72. The address of the publisher is 175 Fifth Avenue, New York 10, New York.

The Viking Press has announced that Jay Leyda will edit a Portable Melville (without **Moby-Dick**) in the Viking Portable series, and that the book will probably be published next year (1951).

The University of Pittsburgh Press has announced for fall publication **Milton's Influence on Herman Melville,** by Henry F. Pommer. Probable price, $5.00.

Moby-Dick has recently been published in the Modern Library College Editions by Modern Library, 457 Madison Avenue, New York 22, N. Y.

Publication of Newton Arvin's **Herman Melville** (by William Sloane Associates, 119 West 57th Street, New York 19, N. Y.) was postponed from March 20 to May 4, 1950.

Ernest E. Leisy has been studying "Pessimism in **Moby-Dick.**" He reports that one of his graduate students (Southern Methodist University) is writing a thesis on "Satire in **Mardi, Moby-Dick,** and **Pierre.**"

George R. Creeger is preparing a dissertation at Yale on "Melville's Use of Color."

The Berkshire Athenaeum at Pittsfield, Massachusetts, is attempting to build a strong collection of Melville items and would welcome contributions by Melville scholars of offprints of their studies. In honor of the centenary of **Moby-Dick,** a special display of Melville materials has been arranged for July and August in the main reading room. The exhibit includes the tomahawk and Turkish slippers (lent by Miss Agnes Morewood) which hung over Melville's fireplace at Arrowhead; a copy of the volume entitled "Fishes" from Cuvier's **Animal**

Kingdom, presented to Melville by his brother Allan and with page markings believed to be in Melville's hand; early editions of Melville's works; and some recent publications.

The New York University Press will publish, possibly during the fall or winter, **Melville's Early Life and Redburn,** by William H. Gilman.

Moby-Dick is included as one of the 48 novels published in six volumes under the title of **The World's Greatest Books Told as Short Stories** by Axtell Publications, Ltd., Axtell House, Warwick Street, Regent Street, London W. 1, England, $6.00.

Montgomery Belgion will deliver in November the Robert Spence Watson lecture before the famous Literary and Philosophical Society of Newcastle upon Tyne (founded 1793). His subject will be Herman Melville. Belgion's introduction to **Moby-Dick** was recently published in a German translation by the **Merkur** magazine in Baden-Baden.

H. Stephen Carlson, a graduate student at Indiana University, is interested in the symbolism of whiteness, as used by Melville and others. Those desiring to correspond with him should address him at 346 South Grant Street, Bloomington, Ind.

T. O. Mabbott believes No. 281 in the Sealts check-list to have been a Tauchnitz edition of Hope's **Anastasius.** He recalls the restrictions against importation of the Tauchnitz editions into Great Britain.

Of interest to Melville scholars is W. H. Auden's **The Enchafed Flood; or, The Romantic Iconography of the Sea** (New York: Random House, 1950). $2.50.

Although complete and accurate information is not at hand, it is believed that Jay Leyda's **The Melville Log: A Documentary Biography** (Harcourt, Brace and Co.) is now ready for publication (about $10.00).

PLANS FOR MEETING

It has been proposed that the next annual meeting of the Society be held in New York City during the last week of December. Those attending would thus be able to take part, if they wished, in the three-day convention of the Modern Language Association of America. While the final decision must be made by our executive committee, it would be helpful to know how many of our members could conveniently attend a New York meeting.

It seems likely that a room at the New York Public Library could be secured for our use. Several suggestions for a program have already been received and reported, and additional ideas are welcome. With so many Melville studies being published, a review of the major contributions during 1950 (especially those of Stone, Arvin, and Chase) might very well be in order. The American Literature Group of the M. L. A., incidentally, has abandoned its plan for a concentration upon Melville this year and will instead introduce papers on the general subject, "New Vistas in American Literary Scholarship."

MOBY-DICK: A PLAY

Dramatic versions of **Moby-Dick** have been presented within the past few years on all the major American radio networks. The British Broadcasting Company in January, 1947, broadcast a version prepared by Henry Reed and since published in book form (London: Jonathan Cape, 1947). During the summer of the same year, **Moby-Dick** appeared on the stage at the Straight Wharf Theatre, Nantucket, in a dramatic version written by R. D. Wilson. Meanwhile, Tyrus Hillway dramatized the work in a play entitled "Captain Ahab." Gil Wilson of New York City has been working on an operatic version.

Is it possible or desirable for the Society to sponsor, or at least encourage, a stage presentation of **Moby-Dick** somewhere in America during the centennial year? Members are urged to offer their suggesions and comments. A number of practical difficulties, of course, lie in the way, and the most formidable of these may be financial.

THE *Melville Society* NEWSLETTER
IS PUBLISHED THREE OR FOUR TIMES EACH YEAR
for the members of the Melville Society, a group of scholars and other persons interested in the life and works of Herman Melville. The Society seeks to facilitate the exchange of information among its members, to stimulate the study of Melville's life and works, and to contribute toward the improvement of the facilities for literary, historical, and bibliographical research. Membership (including subscription to the Newsletter) may be secured through payment of one dollar annually to the Secretary, Tyrus Hillway, 423 Pequot Avenue, New London, Connecticut.